

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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WHITEHEAD'S SWIFTLET

Data Deficient

Collocalia whiteheadi

DISTRIBUTION Whitehead's Swiftlet (see Remarks 1) is endemic to the Philippines, where it is only known from four mountains, one on Luzon (n nominate *whiteheadi*) and three on Mindanao (race *origenis*).

■ **PHILIPPINES** Records are as follows: *Luzon (western) Mt Data*, "near the summit" (c.2,300 m), January 1895 (Ogilvie Grant 1895c, Whitehead 1899c, Dickinson *et al.* 1991; four specimens in AMNH, BMNH);

Mindanao (central) Mt Kitanglad on Mt Nangkabulos, April 1993 (Heaney *et al.* 1993); **Mt Apo**, 1,200 m, July 1904 (Dickinson *et al.* 1991); **Mt Matutum**, South Cotabato, November 1993 (P. L. Alviola and NADM), with three specimens from this province, collected recently (CMNH register data). Additionally, several *Collocalia* mist-netted (but not positively identified) on a cliff face at Mt Kitanglad in February 1997 are most likely to have been this species (A. C. Diesmos verbally 1997).

POPULATION Numbers are unknown.

ECOLOGY Habitat Whitehead's Swiftlet, the largest of the eight in its genus in the Philippines, occupies airspace over forested mountains above 1,200 m (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). The four adult specimens of *origenis* were reportedly taken from a hollow tree (Dickinson 1989), presumably when roosting. If the 1997 birds from Mt Kitanglad (see Distribution) are indeed Whitehead's Swiftlet, cliffs may be important in the species's habitat preferences.

Food Nothing has been recorded, but clearly as an aerial feeder this bird will take aerial plankton of various sorts.

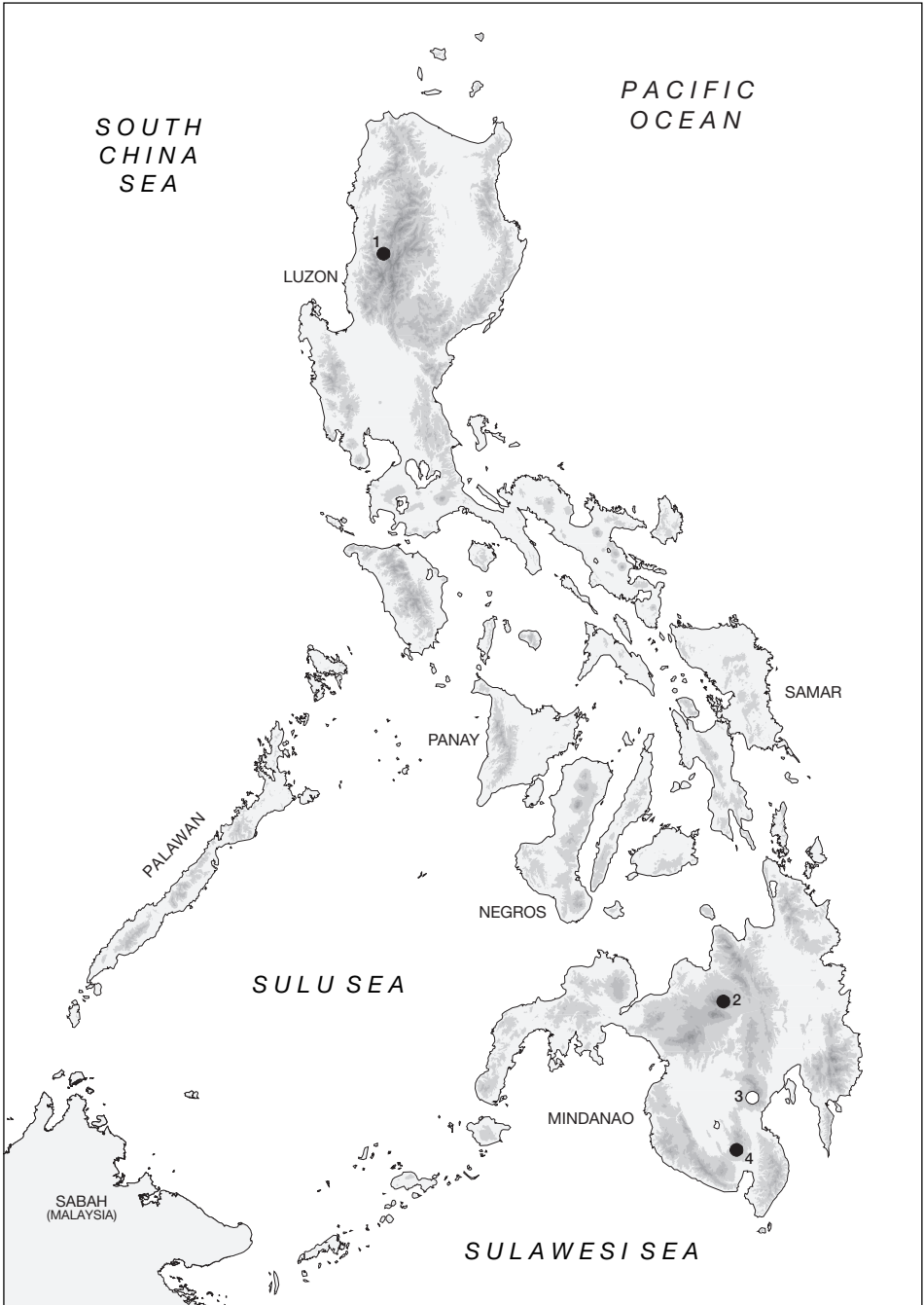
Breeding On Mt Apo a nestling and nests were taken in July, reportedly from cliffs (Dickinson 1989, Dickinson *et al.* 1991). Four nests, thought to have been made by *C. w. origenis* and collected at Mt Apo during 1904 from a hollow tree, were "rounded vegetable nests constructed of green bryophytes together with some fibrous plant material, and apparently not incorporating nest cement" (Oberholser 1906, Medway 1966).

Migration It is not known whether the species vacates its known haunts for any part of the year, but this is by no means implausible: Dickinson (1989) remarked of the Mt Data population that "it may or may not be a resident form", but Chantler (1995) speculated that the species is "presumably resident".

THREATS Restricted range (if genuine) and habitat loss within its range may combine to jeopardise the species (Collar *et al.* 1994). Mt Data is now reported to be devoid of forest (NADM), and Mts Kitanglad, Apo and Matutum all face problems of different kinds which compromise the future of their forests (BRT). However, so little is known about this species in terms of its range and ecological needs that its conservation status cannot yet be judged.

MEASURES TAKEN Mts Kitanglad and Apo on Mindanao are CPPAP sites while conservation-related activities on Mt Matutum are supported by FPE funding (see Appendix).

MEASURES PROPOSED This swift is not known from any "key sites" apart from the areas targeted for conservation above. However, it seems fairly likely that it will be found to be more widespread once its identification can be assured. Fieldwork to determine identification characters, or to determine effective techniques for mist-netting birds, is therefore essential in



The distribution of Whitehead's Swiftlet *Collocalia whiteheadi*: (1) Mt Data; (2) Mt Kitanglad; (3) Mt Apo; (4) Mt Matutum.

○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Recent (1980–present)

order to allow a true assessment of the species's status. Meanwhile, studies at known sites for the species would be valuable to lay the basis for its appropriate management there and perhaps elsewhere.

REMARKS (1) Dickinson (1989) reviewed the taxonomy of larger Philippine *Collocalia* and considered it best not to attach *whiteheadi* and *origenis* to *brevirostris* as the nest type differs and the rump is virtually uniform with the back (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). Whitehead's Swiftlet is supposed to be larger-headed, with a deeper tail-fork (Chantler 1995), so that observers with sufficient experience of *Collocalia* should be able to tell it apart in the field.